



# 2005 Annual Report



# Washington WIC

*Improving the lifelong health and nutrition of women, infants and young children*



# WIC at a glance

WIC - the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children - is an integral part of Washington's public health system and is designed to reach families most in need of preventive health services. This report describes how the public's investment in WIC improves the health of Washington's families, communities, and economy.

## WIC is prevention by design

WIC is built on decades of medical research that shows promoting healthy habits early in life is a powerful and cost-effective way to prevent debilitating chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and obesity. WIC also:

- Reduces premature births
- Lowers infant mortality
- Prevents childhood anemia
- Improves cognitive development
- Increases breastfeeding rates

## WIC is good for the economy

WIC strengthens local economies and prevents costly health care problems. During the past 30 years, Washington WIC has contributed more than \$1 billion in grocery store sales and saved an estimated \$700 million in health care costs.<sup>1</sup> WIC also supports farmers by boosting sales of locally grown fruits and vegetables through the Farmers Market Nutrition Program.



## Who WIC serves

Lower-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and children under age 5 who have a health or nutrition risk are eligible for WIC. In 2005, local WIC agencies served:

- 273,750 women, infants and children
- Half of all infants born in the state
- Working families - more than 67% are employed

## How WIC helps

WIC provides a unique set of targeted services to help families give their children a healthy start. Core services include:

- Education and counseling on nutrition and physical activity
- Breastfeeding education and support
- Nutritious foods purchased with WIC checks
- Referrals to other preventive health services like prenatal care, immunizations, and quit-smoking programs

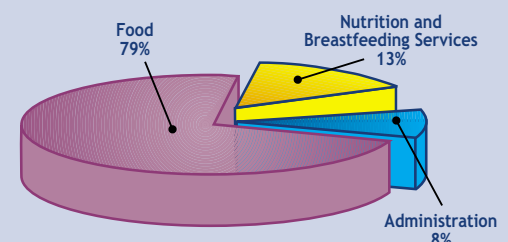


## 2005 WIC funding

WIC is supported through partnerships with federal, state and local governmental agencies, tribes, community organizations, and businesses.

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| • US Dept. of Agriculture.....\$109.1 million | • Local government funds  |
| • Infant formula rebates.....\$25.2 million   | • Provider agency funding |
| • Washington State funds.....\$1.2 million    | • Community contributions |

## How WIC funds are spent





# WIC counts: 2005 highlights

## \$104 million in grocery sales in Washington

At more than 730 grocery stores statewide, families use WIC checks to buy milk, cheese, eggs, low-sugar/high-iron cereals, carrots, iron-fortified infant formula, peanut butter, juice, tuna, and dried beans, peas and lentils.



## 1.2 million discussions with families about services they need



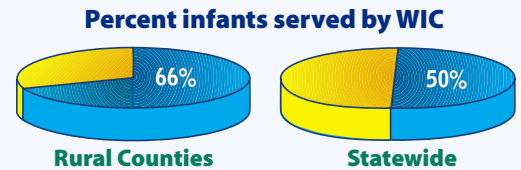
WIC staff give families information and support to successfully connect with health and related services.



## \$774,000 in sales to local farmers from WIC's Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Thanks to our community partners and increased federal funding, more WIC families are eating locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. This program is now available in 28 Washington counties, up from 16 in 2003.

## 66% of infants born in Washington's rural counties



In every community in the state - big cities and small towns, rural and urban - babies benefit from WIC. More than 40,000 infants were served statewide.

## 1/2 the number of very low birthweight babies



The benefits of WIC begin even before a child is born and last a lifetime. Providing WIC to pregnant women cuts very low birthweights by nearly half and helps prevent related lifelong health problems like cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and lung disease.<sup>2,3</sup>



## 11,000 women and children in military families

WIC serves women in the armed services, as well as women and children living in military households.<sup>4</sup>

## 3rd in the nation for breastfeeding

Washington WIC's breastfeeding rates are among the highest in the country and continue to improve. Promoting breastfeeding is a powerful, cost effective way to improve lifelong health.

WIC Breastfeeding Initiation Rates <sup>5</sup>		
1. Oregon	81.7%	
2. Alaska	81.1%	
3. Washington	81.0%	
4. Montana	79.0%	
5. Idaho	78.1%	
U.S. WIC	54.3%	

## Weighing in against obesity and diabetes

WIC helps communities reduce their rates of obesity and diabetes by making it easier for families to make healthy choices by:

- Increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- Promoting breastfeeding, family meals, and physical activity
- Emphasizing foods lower in fat and providing only nutritious, low-sugar cereals



# WIC brings together the right pieces to create a healthy future



## WIC is a part of the community

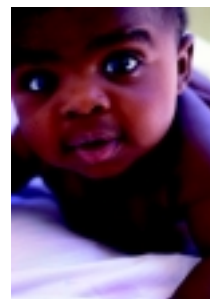
WIC is in every county, near where people live and work. And like the communities they live in, the families WIC serves are ethnically and culturally diverse.

- Services are provided in more than 50 languages
- WIC services are offered at health departments, hospitals, tribal and migrant health centers, community clinics and centers, and military bases

## WIC puts families first

WIC has a strong reputation for responsive, caring customer service and is designed to make it easy for families to connect with the services they need. WIC has 223 sites around the state, and:

- Offers evening and weekend hours
- Is co-located with other public health services
- Provides an online WIC clinic locator in English and Spanish
- Authorizes more than 730 grocery stores to accept WIC checks



## Healthy behaviors

### Healthy habits make the difference

Individual behaviors affect a person's lifelong health. Changing behavior is hard, and can be especially challenging for families struggling to make ends meet. WIC's client-centered education helps families build on their healthy habits to create an even healthier future for their children.

#### What Determines Health<sup>6</sup>

<b>Behavior .....</b>	<b>40%</b>
Genetics .....	30%
Social Circumstances .....	15%
Medical .....	10%
Environment .....	5%



## WIC helps families use what they learn

Knowing what's healthy is not enough. Busy lives, no time for family meals, limited planning and cooking skills... We all face many challenges to eating healthy and being active. WIC's nutrition education and hands-on activities give families practical ways to use what they learn in their daily lives. Topics include:

- Meal planning and cooking skills
- Eating healthy on a tight budget
- Nutritious snacks for kids
- Making time for family meals
- Fast, healthy recipes
- Fun ways to be active together



## Healthy foods

### WIC foods are key

WIC provides the right foods at the right time to promote good growth and development. All WIC foods are rich in nutrients known to be inadequate in the diets of children from lower income families.



WIC Foods	Nutrients	Health Benefits
Milk, cheese	Calcium	Builds healthy bones and teeth; prevents osteoporosis
Eggs, iron-fortified cereals, dried beans, peas and lentils	Iron	Builds blood cells; prevents anemia
Milk, cheese, eggs, tuna, peanut butter, dried beans, peas and lentils	Protein	Builds muscle and blood cells; supports healthy growth
Milk, carrots	Vitamin A	Supports healthy eyes and skin
Fruit and vegetable juices	Vitamin C	Fights infections; promotes healing; improves iron absorption
Milk	Vitamin D	Improves calcium absorption



## Connections

### WIC is a strong and effective community partner

Families and communities are healthier and better served because of WIC's robust outreach and referral services, and its broad network of local partners.

- WIC outreach brought 22,456 calls to a statewide referral line supported by a partnership of public health programs and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Washington. With just one call, families get connected to WIC and many other services they need.
- Together with Maternity Support Services and Infant Case Management, WIC helps pregnant women get connected to birth and parenting support they need to have a healthy baby.
- Working with Washington's Immunization Program CHILD Profile, WIC agencies design effective community projects to get children immunized and their records into the state registry.



### Good oral health is critical to overall health

WIC is part of a statewide partnership active in 25 Washington counties to increase access to preventive dental care and decrease oral disease rates in young children. WIC staff play a key role in this partnership, known as ABCD - Access to Baby and Child Dentistry - by screening for early signs of poor oral health and referring for dental care by age one.







# Staying focused on breastfeeding

## Breastfeeding is primary, cost-effective prevention

Promoting breastfeeding is a core WIC service and a national public health strategy to protect children from serious health risks. The benefits of breastfeeding go beyond reducing the risk of many lifelong chronic conditions:

- Breastfed infants are 80% less likely to die before age 1 than those never breastfed<sup>8</sup>
- Immunizations are more effective in breastfed babies and breastfed infants react better to their shots<sup>9,10</sup>
- \$3.6 billion per year would be saved nationally if the 6-month breastfeeding rate rose from the current 21% to 50%<sup>11</sup>

## Breastmilk is best for baby's first year

Health experts recommend breastfeeding for at least one year, and only breastmilk for the first 6 months of life - no formula, no solid foods. Although 81% of mothers on WIC in Washington start breastfeeding, only 34% continue for 6 months. To help women breastfeed longer, WIC provides mother-to-mother counseling and breast pumps to working women.

## Breastfeeding lowers health risks and reduces costs<sup>12,13</sup>

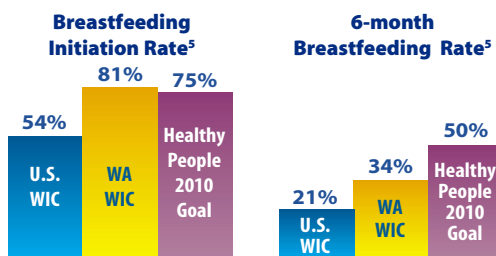
### Babies who are not breastfed have higher rates of:

- Infections
- Asthma
- Childhood obesity
- Diabetes
- Allergies
- SIDS

### For every 1000 babies who are not breastfed there are:

- 2,033 more medical office visits
- 212 more days of hospitalizations
- 609 more prescriptions

### Women who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast cancer and osteoporosis.

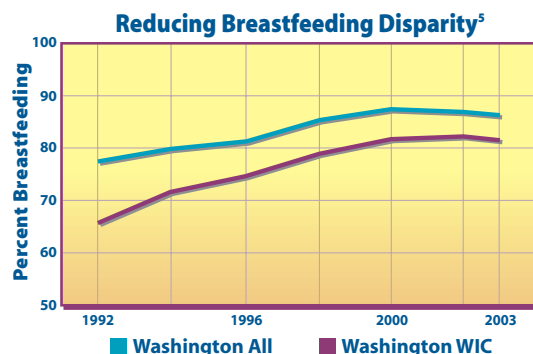


## Breastfeeding is a community health issue

Even though it benefits the health of communities, mothers face many social, cultural, and policy barriers to breastfeeding. WIC works with community partners to reduce these barriers and sponsors the Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington, an alliance of local groups working to increase breastfeeding rates.

## WIC is closing the gap

Breastfeeding is a powerful way for any family to give their child the healthiest start in life. WIC works hard to promote breastfeeding because families with limited incomes tend to have lower breastfeeding rates. Nationally the disparity in breastfeeding initiation rates between low-income women on WIC and all women is 11%. Since 1992, Washington WIC has narrowed the gap in our state from 11.1% to 4.6%.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Mathematica Policy Research: The savings in Medicaid costs for newborns and their mothers from prenatal participation in the WIC program. Prepared for U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, October 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Early Intervention: Federal Investments Like WIC Can Produce Savings. Washington DC: U.S. General Accounting Office; 1992. GAO/HRD Publication No. 92-18.

<sup>9</sup> March of Dimes®. "Prematurity - the answers can't come soon enough." [http://www.marchofdimes.com/prematurity/5415\\_8612.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/prematurity/5415_8612.asp)

<sup>10</sup> Photo taken by Petty Officer 3rd class Campbell, U.S. Navy, and provided by the Department of Defense.

<sup>11</sup> "Mothers Survey, Ross Products Division, and Abbott Laboratories." 2003 - Abbott Laboratories.

<sup>12</sup> McGinnis, M, et al. "The Case for More Active Policy Attention to Health Promotion." *Health Affairs*. 2002; Volume 21, No.2.

<sup>7</sup> MSS (Maternity Support Services) provides pregnant women who have Medicaid coverage with assessment, education, intervention and counseling.

<sup>8</sup> Forste R, Weiss J, Lippincott E. "The Decision to Breastfeed in the United States: Does Race Matter?" *Pediatrics*. 2001; 108; 291-296.

<sup>9</sup> Pabst HF, et al. "Effect of Breast-feeding on Immune Response to BCG Vaccination." *Lancet*. 1989; 1:295-7.

<sup>10</sup> Gray L, Miller LW, Philipp BL, Blass EM. "Breastfeeding Is Analgesic in Healthy Newborns." *Pediatrics*. 2002; 109:590-593.

<sup>11</sup> Weimer, J. "The Economic Benefits of Breastfeeding: A Review and Analysis." Economic Research Service, USDA 2001; FNARR-13.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding, Wash. D.C., DHHS, Office of Women's Health, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Ball, TM, Wright, AL. "Health Care Costs of Formula-feeding in the First Year of Life." *Pediatrics* (Suppl.) 1999; 103(4):870-876.

## Contact us

Visit [www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/wic](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/wic) to find more information about Washington WIC, a copy of this report, and WIC county fact sheets, or call 1-800-841-1410 and press 0, or write PO Box 47886, Olympia WA 98504-7886. For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats.

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